

Adult Teaching Resources

February 7, 2021



Season of Epiphany

Mark 1:29-39—“Jesus, the Traveler”

Mark 9:2-9—“Jesus, the Dazzler”

Season of Lent

Mark 1:9-15—“Jesus, the Preacher”

Mark 8:31-38—“Jesus, the Challenger”

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“Jesus, the Traveler”

Mark 1:29-39

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Key Verse

Mark 1:31—“He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”

Opening

After everyone arrives, ask your larger group to form smaller groups of 3-4. Once settled, ask everyone to think about their life, their schedule, and their responsibilities.

Ask each person to share with their small group how they choose what to do each day and each part of the day, knowing they can be pulled in multiple directions at once. In other words, how does each person prioritize what gets done?

Give everyone time to think and then let the sharing begin.

After each group has finished sharing, open the floor for volunteers to share with the larger group how they prioritize their many, individual responsibilities.

Comment on the similarities and differences each person shares.

Before moving to the Bible, ask the large group what they think about the idea of “finding balance” with all the responsibilities. Is “balance” possible? Why do they say that?

Reading the Bible

Where did they go after they left the synagogue? (the house of Simon and Andrew)

What was wrong with Simon’s mother-in-law? (she was in bed with a fever)

What did Jesus do? (he took her by the hand and lifted her up)

What happened to her? (the fever left her)

What did she do? (she began to serve them)

What happened that day at sunset? (the sick and those possessed with demons showed up)

Who was gathered around the door? (the whole city)

What did Jesus do? (he cured many and cast out many demons and would not permit the demons to speak)

Reading the Bible *continued*

What did Jesus do in the morning? (he got up early and went to a deserted place to pray)

What did Simon and his companions do? (they searched for Jesus)

What did Jesus say to them? (“Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”)

Where did they go and what did they do? (he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in synagogues and casting out demons)

Making Connections

How does someone become famous these days? What are the channels that word spreads about someone? Are some channels more authoritative than others? Why do you say that?

What do you consider to be a “full day” when you look back at night and are pleased with everything that you accomplished? How often do you have that kind of day?

Who have you heard teach or preach that you would say “had authority?” What did that person say or do for you to feel that way? What does it mean for someone to “have authority?”

Who do you know, or who have you heard about, that was good at what they did and let it get to their head and they became less good over time? What were they good at? How did they change once it got to their head? How were they, and others affected, by their downfall?

Who do you know, or who have you heard about, that was good at what they did and remained constant in the personality and work, and remained just as good, if not better, as time went on? What were they good at? How could you tell their “fame” didn’t affect them?

What does it mean to serve others? Why is it important to serve others? When does serving others get in the way?

What do you think about Jesus healing the sick and those possessed with demons? Is it possible? How does he do it? Is it impossible? Why is this story in the Bible? Have you experienced divine healing? Share your story.

Our Lesson Writer says, “Jesus responded to the mass of human need with both patience and compassion.” When have you responded to someone in need with your own patience and compassion? What affect did that have on the other person?

Do you believe Jesus has the ability to help us overcome and move on? Why do you say that?

When do you need to “recharge your batteries” so you can be most effective for others? How do you do it? How often do you do it?

Where, in your immediate part of the world, does the message of good news need to be proclaimed? How can you proclaim it so that others might hear it?

So What?

Remain in the large group for this part of the lesson. Move to the front of the room to the board so you can record answers, and then ask everyone to consider the question:

What is our calling—as individuals, as a class, and as a church?

Give everyone time to think, then open the floor for conversation and discussion. As folks share, record important themes and ideas on the board for everyone to see. Notice the similarities and differences in the answers.

Then, press for deeper discussion by following up with these questions:

If _____ is our calling, what are we doing to fulfill that call? If we haven't done anything yet, what is holding us back? What do you need to happen for you/us to fulfill the call?

Spend time in discussion, focusing on what we need to do. Encourage your group to share their thoughts and ideas to help each other figure out how to do more to live their calling. If appropriate for your class, ask folks to be accountability partners to help keep each other focused and on-track.

The Challenge

This week, do one thing that is a step in the right direction to fulfilling your call from Jesus. Use your accountability partner and share your step with him/her. Be ready to report back to your group next week.

Prayer

Loving God, you call each one of us to serve others. You set before us the perfect model. Help us to know what to do, when to do it, and when to take time to rest and recover. We want be faithful to who and what you've called us to be. Work within us so that we can be your faithful servants. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Time’s a wastin’!—Mark describes Jesus as a man on a mission from the beginning. Within the first chapter he relates stories of Jesus’ baptism by John (vv. 1-11), his temptation in the wilderness (vv. 12-13), and the beginning of his preaching ministry in Galilee (vv. 14-15). During a visit to Capernaum, Jesus called his first four disciples (vv. 16-20), taught in the synagogue (vv. 21-22), performed miracles of healing (vv. 23-27), and still wasn’t done. Today’s text fills out a busy day as it continues a rapid reprise of Jesus’ early ministry.

Mark relates these stories with a breathless pace, often transitioning from one event to the next with the Greek word *euthus*, which we translate as “immediately” or “at once” (vv. 12, 18, 20, 29, 30).

Down by the sea—First-time visitors to Israel are sometimes surprised to learn that the Sea of Galilee is actually a lake: an alternate name used in the New Testament is Lake Gennesaret (Lu. 5:1). Today it is called Lake Kinneret, for its harp-like shape (*kinneret* is the Hebrew word for “harp”). Though a lake, it is a sizeable body of water, about 13 miles long and up to eight miles wide.

The small boat in the picture below, near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, is about the same size as those used in the first century.



Digging Deeper *continued*

Synagogue—Visitors to the village of Capernaum today can still see the foundation of what may have been the synagogue where Jesus taught. The limestone wall at right in the photo below is from a second or third century synagogue. The straight line of dark basalt stones beneath it is probably from the synagogue it replaced, re-used as a foundation.



Peter’s wife’s mother—An old preacher’s joke claims that a seminary chapel speaker preached such a powerful sermon on this text that all the students were furiously taking notes. A rural church nearby had no pastor, and was in the habit of inviting seminary students to preach. For three weeks running, the story is told, enthusiastic young pulpiteers preached from the text “Peter’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever.”

When two local farmers heard the church bell ringing late one afternoon, one of them wondered if it might signify that someone had died. The other said “It’s probably Peter’s wife’s mother—she’s been sick these three weeks!”

Fever—Fever can range from mild to very serious, and Peter’s mother-in-law must have been truly sick, as she “lay sick of a fever,” unable to go about normal activities. The Old Testament speaks of fevers as serious business, when God threatened to send fevers on the Israelites if they rebelled: “I will bring terror on you; consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away” (Lev. 26:16). Though Mark doesn’t say this fever was thought to be caused by a demon, his statement that “it left her” indicates that might have been his belief. The healing Jesus offered demonstrated his ability to overcome evil in any form.

A Sabbath journey—The Law of Moses actually forbade the Hebrews from traveling at all on the Sabbath day (Exod. 16:29), but that was clearly not very practical. After the development of the synagogue—which one could not attend without walking some distance—the rabbis developed specific rules to govern walking on the Sabbath. They determined that one could travel up to 2,000 cubits (about 1,000 yards) from home on the Sabbath, a little more than half a mile. They based their reasoning on an angular interpretation of Josh. 3:4, which instructed the Israelites to follow 2,000 yards behind the Ark of the Covenant as they crossed the Jordan into Canaan. As time went on, some rabbis added an exception to the rule by allowing one to establish temporary “home” bases, permitting one to travel up to 8,000 cubits in certain instances.

Digging Deeper *continued*

By waiting until sundown, sick people from greater distances would have been able to reach Capernaum and seek healing from Jesus.

Demons—What people believed about demons evolved over time. Old Testament writers believed that God was surrounded by a heavenly host of created beings that could be sent either to bless humans or to afflict them (Saul, for example, 1 Sam. 16:14-16). Over time, however, the notion of God causing evil became more problematic, and evil spirits were thought to derive from sources other than God.

The Israelites were often influenced by their neighbors, and so also harbored desert traditions of demons that demanded sacrifices (Lev. 17:7, Ps. 106:37). Some demon-like figures were associated with foreign gods. These included Resheph, a Canaanite god whose name was used for pestilence or plague (Deut. 32:24, Hab. 3:5); Lillith, a Mesopotamian goddess who was conceived as a night demon who inhabited the wilderness (Isa. 34:14); and Azazel, a desert demon to whom the scapegoat was sent on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8, 10, 26).

In Greek thought, demons (a transliteration of the Greek word *daimon*) could be either good or bad. In Jewish culture during the time of Jesus, demons were considered to be evil spirits under the control of Satan that could cause physical or mental illness. The synoptic gospels' frequent mention of Jesus casting out demons is designed to emphasize Jesus' authority over all that is evil (see, for example, Mark 3:22-27, 5:1-20; Matt. 8:16-17, 12:22-32; Luke 6:17-19, 8:26-39).

Interestingly enough, the author of John's gospel does not include any stories of Jesus casting out demons. When demons are mentioned in the book of John, it is in the words of Jewish opponents who accused Jesus of having a demon (John 7:20, 8:48-49, 10:20-21).

When Paul refers to demons, he tends to use figurative language, speaking of evil forces that can influence people to sin, but not as conscious spirits that invade the body, causing mental illness or physical diseases (Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 2:2, 3:10, 6:11-12). Paul insisted that Christ's death and resurrection had defeated the power of evil forces, so Christians did not have to live in thrall to them (Col. 2:15, 20).

Rest—Many pastors as well as other professional workers suffer “career burnout” from having invested too much time and energy into one area. Jesus was wise enough to show his disciples how to avoid burnout. Today's text shows how he would steal away for quiet prayer, and at other times he would lead them to actively retreat. After the sad news of John the Baptizer's beheading became known, for example, Jesus insisted that the disciples take to their boats and find a quiet place where all could rest and eat in peace (6:30-32).

Jesus understood that adequate food, rest, and even recreation are essential parts of a balanced life. We must take care of ourselves physically and emotionally if we expect to be effective in more formal service.

Desert, or deserted?—Mark describes Jesus as getting up long before day and going somewhere quiet to pray. The word *erēmon* can describe a desert place, a wilderness place, or a deserted

Digging Deeper *continued*

place. Since Galilee is many miles from the desert and it Capernaum was on the northwest shore surrounded by hills, the intent is probably that he retreated to some quiet place, not necessarily off in the wilderness. After all, the disciples were able to find him. In this case, something like “deserted place” or “place of solitude” is most apt.

Prayer—When I was a boy, the pastor of my church was known for his long prayers. Being impatient, I used to dread the “Pastoral Prayer” on Sunday morning. Looking back, however, I recall that the whole world was in that pastor’s prayers. If I had listened more closely, perhaps I would have understood God’s call much earlier in life. Seeking God through meditation, prayer, and Bible study provides the spiritual preparation we need for active service.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What was Jesus' message?

Today's text records Jesus' insistence that his primary purpose was not healing the sick or working miracles, but to "proclaim the message." That's the NRSV translation of the Greek verb *kērússō*, which we normally translate as "preach," as in KJV, NIV11, HCSB, NET, and most other versions. The basic meaning of the word is "to cry out" or "to proclaim a message," as a herald would do.

But what did Jesus preach? What was the heart of his message?

Mark's brief summary of Jesus' preaching is found in the first chapter of his gospel: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'" (1:14-15).

Luke's recording of Jesus' visit to the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth says that he read from the scroll of Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" (Luke 4:18-19, Isa. 61:1-2a).

Jesus' claim that "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" ignited a firestorm, for the text was widely regarded as a prophecy of a coming messiah who would deliver Israel from its enemies. Jesus' self-identification as the messiah was so radical that neither his hometown synagogue nor the religious elites in Jerusalem could accept it.

In his ministry, Jesus went on to proclaim good news and bring deliverance not only to the poor and the blind, but to those who were captive to sin, meeting both physical and spiritual needs. His message consisted of both word and action, proclaiming that God was doing a new thing, the kingdom had arrived, and all could be part of it. His transforming miracles of healing, casting out demons, and feeding the multitudes were like acted sermons, visible demonstrations of the deliverance available to all who would "repent and believe in the good news."

Jesus' preaching transformed the messianic hope of a renewed political kingdom for Israel to the good news that all people could experience the freedom and the future of participating in the reign of God. This did not sit well with those who defended the traditional views. They thought putting Jesus to death would also bury his message, but the grave could not keep either Jesus or the good news he came to preach. The kingdom of God has come near, the challenge to repent and believe.